

Organization Changes Made

Within the past year the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Region One office in Portland made management changes to Mid-Columbia River Wildlife Refuges. Greg Hughes administers the Complex since Gary Hagedorn retired. Physical moves will occur as the new building is completed. USFW staff contacts remain at the Port of Benton Office in north Richland. The complex now includes the Hanford Reach and the following National Wildlife Refuges: Conboy Lake, Cold Spring, Columbia, McKay Creek, McNary, Saddle Mountain, Toppenish and Umatilla.

Register Soon For Environmental Classes

Environmental education classes will be held as usual at the McNary NWR Education Center. Openings for class visits are available for teacher registration in late March and April. Until our volunteer list expands, May is closed to new registrations. Please register soon so Shannon Hays-Truex can plan for volunteers. An informative session for volunteers is scheduled for March 5 at the Center from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Anyone interested – or even curious – about how the outdoor hands-on sessions operate is invited to attend. Bring your own lunch. The McNary National Wildlife Refuge is situated at 311 Lake Road, Burbank. Call Shannon at 509-946-4813



New complex headquarters takes shape at McNary

Combined Refuge CCP Issued

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service issued the draft of McNary and Umatilla National Wildlife Refuges: *Environmental Assessment for the Comprehensive Conservation Plan*. The plan for the two Refuges was combined because of the overlap of groundwork research to determine goals, objectives, and strategies for management over the next 15 years.

The plan offers four alternatives and proposes action to implement the preferred Alternative 2, which emphasizes management for migratory birds, special status species, and wildlife-dependent recreation.

You are invited to review the document and participate in the planning process. The document may be viewed in the reference sections of Hermiston Public Library, Umatilla Public Library, Richland Public Library, and the Walla Walla Public Library on Lake Rd in Burbank. You may request a compact diskette from the Refuge Office at 509-371-9212 or access the full document, including maps, online at <http://pacific.fws.gov/planning>.

Hanford Reach CCP Released

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service released the *Draft Hanford Reach National Monument Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Impact Statement*. This is the overall plan that will guide management of the Monument for the next 15 years. The entire plan, or any of its components, may be reviewed or downloaded at <http://www.fws.gov/hanfordreach/planning.html>.

Mail your written comments to: **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Draft CCP Comments, 3250 Port of Benton Boulevard, Richland, Washington 99354** (preferred method). Or Email your comments to hanfordreach@fws.gov — be sure to include "Draft CCP Comments" in the subject line. Your participation and comments are encouraged.

Birding At McNary NWR

with Chris Simonen

Have you ever watched a hawk flying very low over the fields and marshes at McNary? Flying so low that it disappears into any slight depression in the landscape? As this hawk glides gracefully over the terrain it occasionally flaps its wings ever so slowly, otherwise the wings are mostly held up at an angle.

Perhaps you next noticed the white rump (the area on top of the body just above the tail). The color of the hawk may have been soft pale gray (a male) or mottled in rich browns (a female). The juveniles have similar coloring to the female and difficult to tell apart. More often you'll see this hawk alone but sometimes a pair. This raptor is the Northern Harrier looking for small birds and mammals.



Harriers will also eat snakes, frogs, mice, and insects especially grasshoppers. They also have been known to take a rabbit or a duck. These were once called Marsh Hawks and you may still hear this name occasionally. They are about 18" long and have a wing span of about 40".

As the harrier zigzags over the terrain and in the pursuit of prey it must fly rapidly and turn sharply. So the wings are short and broad and the tails are long in order for them to have this maneuverability. Across the United States the harrier numbers have been going down due to loss of habitat. McNary and Washington are fortunate that the Northern Harrier is often seen here and is a year-around resident.

Waterfowl Tested For Avian Flu

Howard Browers, Biologist

Biological staff of Mid-Columbia River Refuges Complex participated in the national avian flu sampling effort by collecting samples during fall, 2006, from hunter-killed waterfowl at Umatilla Refuge. The sampling was done as part of a massive effort to collect samples from both live and dead waterfowl across the entire United States. Several state and federal agencies have been involved in the effort.

From mid-October through early December biologists collected 93 swab samples at Umatilla Refuge. None of those samples tested positive for the H5N1 strain of avian flu that has caused human and poultry deaths in parts of Asia and Europe. To date nearly 71,000 ducks, geese, swans, and shorebirds have been tested across the United States with none testing positive for H5N1.



Howard Browers takes swab for avian flu sampling

Come to McNary NWR on the Second Saturday of any month and get the latest information on the new Administration building, the new Environmental Education Center, and expected action on the exposed shoreline along the trail.

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History of the McNary NWR Tepee

by Greg Greger

At the start of year 2000, a tule mat-covered tepee was a vision appropriate to use for a learning tool in reviewing lives and customs of Native Americans known as river peoples in the Columbia Basin. After a plan was carefully crafted by volunteers, and approved by USFW staff, the present site was prepared. An 8th grade teacher and her pupils agreed to take on construction of the tepee as their special science project. Wanapum leaders counseled us throughout the project.

Harvesting the material began in autumn when the tule, a bulrush, reached its maturity. As done by the native peoples, students cut bulrushes at ground level (actually below the water surface) to obtain maximum length and thickness. The stems were tied in bundles and stood upright to dry. When school resumed in January the bundles were moved to the Environmental Education Center where work surfaces, special needles, and templates were ready to use for mat making.

Three students worked side by side simultaneously on one mat. Tule stems were pierced crosswise with special long needles and hemp cord was pulled through stems until there was a tightly woven mat 6 feet long. A final twined binding seam completed the sewing and the mats were trimmed to 48 inches wide. These would be installed with the stems aligned vertically with the supporting poles.

Lodgepole Pine poles were brought to the site and erected to form the frame. Smaller branches were placed across the poles at 4 foot intervals on which the mats were fastened in horizontal rows with the bottom row resting on the ground. A traditional east facing entrance was made in this row between two tepee poles. The entrance cover

was made of cattail stems, twined together and installed horizontally so that it could roll up to allow entry.

The mats were never removed from the frame because the tepee was constantly in use as a learning tool. Therefore, seasonal weather and our desert winds wrecked havoc on the tule and the weaving strings. Periodic repairs were made, but it became apparent that a change of covering was necessary. Reviewing our resources, we did not have workers required to duplicate the thousands of hours that went into creating the original mat covering. Other choices were explored. To further the effort of the Education Center, the Richland Senior Association donated \$500 to help obtain a modern canvas covering which can be more quickly installed. The existing lodge poles will be restructured to fit the oval canvas cover floor plan.

Volunteers who wish to aid in the installation will be asked to view a video of the procedure. Then installation can be done in a four hour-session. To be a part of this phase of Native American history, contact Greg Greger, Tel. 943-3951, or <mgreg1@verizon.net> to obtain more information.



Trail Talk

by Naomi Sherer

Surprises await visitors on McNary NWR trail. Be prepared for the unexpected. The mess along the chip trail where tons of mud and rhizomes is disconcerting.

Phragmites, a noxious reed that steals water surface, is now being dredged from the pond. A daunting obstacle. Nevertheless the trail beckons. Recent fog dampens the dead plants making for clean passage – no hitchhiking burrs or cheatgrass seeds will work their way into socks or pant-legs in wet cold conditions. Narrow paths made by four

legged creatures criss cross the area between tall grasses bent with the moisture. Paths converge under large sagebrush from many directions. Who went there? The same individual? Or many? One can only wonder. The wet plants offer nary a clue.



A Rorschach test for hikers

Tracks of raccoons and weasels are imprinted in the mud before freezing, leaving a fossil-like remnant of their passing. Look for deer tracks and telltale scat left by the vigilant coyote on constant hunting alert. Beyond Post 12 at the bridge, look below for the waterway where muskrats pass from one pond to another. When the ice is clear and thin, those water-based mammals leave bubbles in their wake.

If birds are of interest, a passing chevron of Canada geese will honk

its way into the silence. Each day, even a different hour, will reveal something of the wildlife that dwells in your wetlands habitat. Be curious and attentive. Be surprised at what you see.

Planting on the Reach

by Howard Browers

The Complex biological staff spent many long hours in the field these past months setting up plots and working with contractors planting upland and riparian

shrubs on the Hanford Reach National Monument.

Riparian trees and shrubs were planted along the outflow below the

WB-10 Ponds on the east side of the Monument where Russian olive were previously removed. The nearly 26,000 plants included black cottonwood, red-

osier dogwood, black hawthorn, water birch, smooth sumac, bitter cherry, Wood's rose, and two species each of currants, and willows.



Upland shrubs were planted at two sites on the Monument to replace shrub-steppe habitat lost to wildfire. Upland shrubs planted included approximately 224,000 sagebrush,

62,000 antelope bitterbrush, and 600 spiny hopsage seedlings.

COMING EVENTS

Second Saturdays

Map Wildflowers in March
Meet the Horse in April
Migrating Songbirds in May

OUR MISSION

To foster understanding, appreciation and conservation of native fish, wildlife, and plants located at Mid-Columbia River National Wildlife Refuges, and
To assist USF&WS in providing opportunities and programs for environmental education and interpretation, and for wildlife dependent recreation.

OUR GOALS

- A. Provide wildlife conservation and environmental education to schools, community residents, governmental agencies, and the visiting public,
- B. Promote outdoor recreational opportunities,
- C. Provide advocacy for the Refuge as needed,
- D. Develop history relating to Native Americans, early explorers, settlers, and area geological events and develop interpretive displays,
- E. Nurture relationships and partnerships with other agencies and organizations with similar goals,
- F. Develop fundraising and membership strategies,
- G. Establish a new visitors' center.

VISIT US AT

<http://www.nwrmcnary.org>



Heavy-duty equipment is used to tear out invasive phragmites weed that had choked off twenty acres of pond surface at McNary NWR

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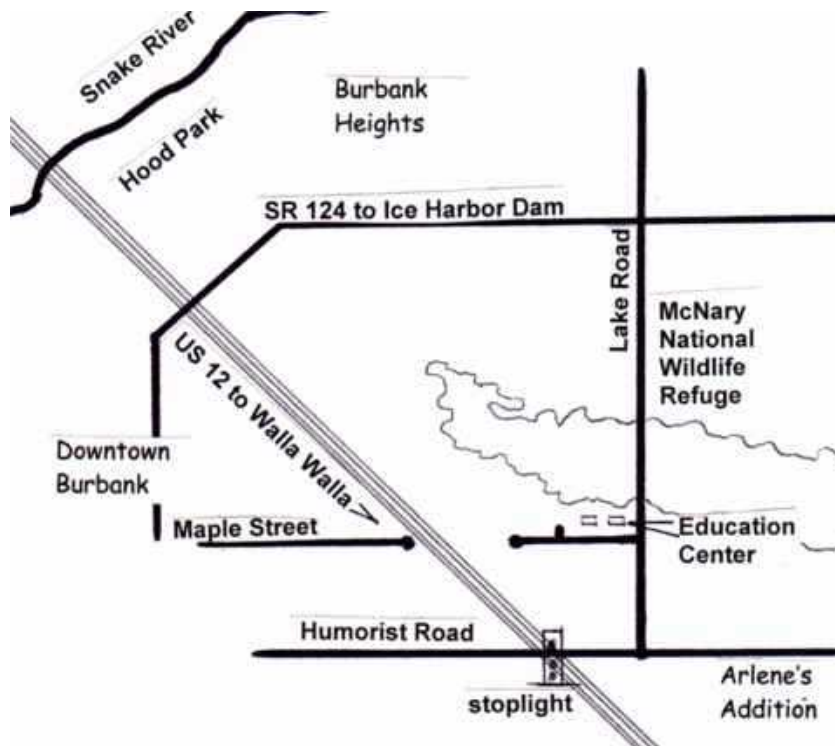
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Come To A Special Event
On The Second Saturday Every Month



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